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STUDY PROJECT

CENTER OF GRAVITY:
THE CRITICAL LINK IN STRATEGIC PLANNING
FOR LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

BY

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CENTER OF GRAVITY: THE CRITICAL LINK IN
STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

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The end of the Cold War ushered in a new world order where sudden and unexpected threats vital to U.S. National Interests can erupt at anytime in a Low Intensity scenario. With the accompanying drawdown of military forces, the decision to use the military element of national power to counter these threats becomes critical. Limited military capabilities and a growing hesitation to employ them will require that our national leaders link strategic goals to operational maneuver. In Low Intensity Conflict planning, this link can be found in the application of operational art and the concept of center of gravity. This study examines the applicability of the concept of center of gravity in Low Intensity Conflict planning. It defines both Low Intensity Conflict and center of gravity and identifies the link between them. It then looks at the doctrinal centers of gravity, as espoused in current doctrine, and determines their application in Low Intensity Conflict. It is not intended to serve as a source listing for centers of gravity in Low Intensity Conflicts, but rather as an indepth look into Low Intensity Conflict to identify those vital characteristics that if attacked will cause a rapid, cascading and deteriorating effect in cohesion, will and morale of the enemy.

CENTER OF GRAVITY: THE CRITICAL LINK IN
STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

General uprising, as we see it, should be nebulous and elusive; its resistance should never materialize as a concrete body, otherwise the enemy can direct sufficient force at its core, crush it, and take many prisoners.[1]

With the end of the Cold War, the United States entered a new era where the prospects for international peace have never been higher. However, the degree of uncertainty about emerging international security environments and continued threats to U.S. National Interests are cause for prudent concern.[2] The precise nature of an U.S. response to any threat will be predicated on the criticality of U.S. interests at stake, the commitment to the nations involved, the level and sophistication of the threat and the capabilities of U.S. and Allied forces.[3] Prior to our committing forces, political, diplomatic, and economic measures must have failed or shown to be ruled out for a cogent reason. Often, the swift and effective application of force, which as a pre-motive or retaliatory measure, can defuse a conflict before it develops into a situation requiring the deployment of large formations. Key to success are clearly stated, measurable and attainable military objectives.[4] Former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger reinforced this concept in his famous November 1984 National Press Club speech where he outlined six major criteria that would have to be met before the U.S. would commit combat troops overseas.

- Vital interest of the U.S. or its allies must be at stake.

- We must be willing to commit enough forces to achieve our objectives.

- We must have clearly defined political and military objectives.

- We must subject our involvement to continuous assessment.

- Prior to deployment of troops, there must be reasonable assurances of public support.

- The use of combat power must be a last resort.[5]

The main purpose of this test was to ensure the U.S. would not gradually get drawn into a combat role in Central America. However, this test is now is being used worldwide.[6] The need to appropriately satisfy these six criteria places great demands on leaders to understand both the conflict environment and the level of national will and then effectively apply the elements of national power accordingly.

At the national level, leaders must deal with political aims that require them to focus on broad but decisive strategic objectives extended over time and space well beyond the operational realm.[7] It is this focus which makes the strategic level dominant in the continuum of war, because it is here that the war's political goals are defined.[8] If national leaders incorrectly identify the aims and goals of the enemy, the resulting use of national assets may be improperly focused and military power employed unnecessarily. Consequently, the desired end state of war, e.g.; to rapidly return to routine peacetime activities, may not be

achieved and the nation may be engaged in extended operations for which they are ill-prepared.[9] To ensure this doesn't occur, adherence to the Weinberger criteria is critical. Key to this whole process is the efficient application of the national elements of power. Because of the ongoing reductions in the base force and the U.S. role of world leader, the application of U.S. national power, more than ever before, must be focused to ensure the most rapid and efficient use of all available resources. The challenge in developing this focus is to understand the link between strategic objectives and military operations which are aimed at quick and decisive defeat of the enemy. When this link is present, the enemy's critical center of power can be revealed and it is then possible to take the initiative and even control the war by focusing on the "hub of all power and movement on which everything else depends," the *center of gravity*.[10] By identifying the enemy's most decisive and critical center of gravity, a military commander can then direct his efforts and limited resources to defeat it. The commander faces a real dilemma here, because the critical center of gravity is not always readily evident. It must evolve from a thorough and detailed analysis of the conflict area. The strengths and weaknesses of the enemy must be known to ensure this analysis produces the correct conclusions. More importantly, the vulnerabilities relevant to this center of gravity must also be revealed because they are the key to a well focused and often successful attack.

Correct identification of the decisive vulnerabilities of the enemy is not always easy. Questions which must be answered in the search include, what are the most decisive vulnerabilities of the enemy and how do we measure their relevance to our objective. An even more important question is, how do these vulnerabilities relate to the center of gravity. Are they fixed for all levels of war across the operational continuum? And, finally, how do these vulnerabilities translate into operational design within which the application of military power is used in the pursuit of political aims.

In seeking answers to these questions, it is necessary to link strategic goals to operational maneuver. This linking process can be achieved through the use of operational art. Operational art, is the employment of military forces to attain strategic objectives in a theater of war, or theater of operations, through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations. The critical linkage between the strategic objectives and operational maneuver and the relationship to the enemy center of gravity can therefore be found in the design of the campaign.[11]

The need to understand the link between strategic goals and operational aims has never been greater. Ushered in with the new world order are a series of potential brush fires which may erupt at anytime requiring the application of military power, in a low intensity scenario, to protect vital U.S. national interests.[12]

These potential low intensity conflicts coupled with the new strategy of power projection and the need to rapidly and decisively strike the enemy's center of gravity places a high premium on contingency planning. Within the sphere of contingency planning, accurate and early identification of the enemy center of gravity will play a crucial role in being able to decisively influence a hostile threat and rapidly bring about conditions favorable to National interests. It is my thesis that the operational concept of center of gravity is present and crucial to planning across the entire continuum of war. Its application is just as relevant in low intensity planning as it is in planning conventional operations. Whereas the center of gravity in conventional operations is normally centered on defeat of the enemy force, the center of gravity in low intensity operations is often centered on the political-social aspect of the conflict.[13] I will explore this within the context of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) by discussing the concept of center of gravity and its applicability in LIC planning.

BACKGROUND

Before beginning a discussion of center of gravity and LIC planning, a common understanding of LIC is essential. Also essential is an understanding of what constitutes a characteristic so critical that it can be classified as a center of gravity. I will therefore define both LIC and center of gravity and establish the link between them. This will be followed by an analysis of the

5

doctrinal concepts of centers of gravity and their application in LIC planning.

LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT (LIC)

The challenge in applying operational art to Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) is in tailoring the planning process for employment at the operational level. JCS Pub 1-02 defines LIC as:

> "Political - military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine peaceful competition among states. It frequently involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. LIC ranges from subversion to the use of armed forces. It is waged by a combination of means employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments. LIC conflicts are often localized, generally in the Third World, but contain regional and security implications."[14]

Six major types of conflict, which are not necessarily distinct or mutually exclusive, have been identified.

1. Terrorism by small political groups aimed at disrupting the existing government.

2. Anti-colonial or anti-foreign-domination national movements.

3. Autonomous movements by indigenous, ethic, or religious minorities.

4. Political/ideological insurgencies based on organized political parties and guerrilla bands.

5. Anti-military, anti-authoritarian movements based on mass mobilization.

6. Civil wars based on fragmented political systems.[15]

Within the overall heading of LIC, JCS Pub 3-07 has developed four accepted operational categories for dealing with these categories of conflict:

1. Insurgency and Counter Insurgency.

2. Combatting Terrorism.

3. Peacekeeping.

4. Contingency Operations.[16]

Although LIC may be perceived to include limited conventional wars, the substantive dimension of such conflicts evolve primarily from revolutionary and counterrevolutionary strategy which is present in all four operational phases.[17] Whereas conventional war focuses on armed forces, revolutionary war centers on the political-social system.[18] Therefore, the center of gravity of a revolutionary war is often found in the political-social system and its psychological coherency.[19] The danger in searching for centers of gravity in LIC is the fluid nature of the conflict often causes them to change. This can be seen in the following discussion of revolutionary warfare.

Revolutions normally evolve as an offensive operation which requires counterrevolution operations to begin on the defense. In this phase, military engagement by the counterrevolutionary force

consists of stationing a force in static guard positions with a mobile force for response to revolutionary threats.[20] As the revolution continues, the counterrevolutionary force must transition from the defense to the offense. This occurs when the insurgent forces lose their advantage as the dominant force either militarily or psychologically.[21] Thus the focus transfers from the social-political to armed forces as the revolution matures and the center of gravity changes accordingly. Therefore, in analyzing LIC, one must ensure he has a full understanding of the maturity of the conflict, its players and their ideological theme, and realize the impact they have on the center of gravity.

Having a full understanding of the conflict and identifying the centers of gravity are not in themselves enough. The planner must also know the relationships between centers of gravity, strategic goals, and operational objectives. The key to understanding these relationships can be found in operational art.

OPERATIONAL ART

An understanding of the concepts of operational art is instrumental in developing the link between political direction, strategic objectives, and the planning and conduct of army operations in theater. These concepts are centers of gravity, decisive points, culminating points, and lines of operation.[22] The operational planner may use these concepts of operational design in striving to reach strategic objectives, to phase the sequence of

8

actions required to achieve these objectives, and finally to apply the proper resources to accomplish them.[23] However, before planning commences, strategic and operational level commanders must agree to the conditions that constitute success (end state). A clear definition of these conditions is essential to focus the planning and ensure successful execution of military operations.[24] To satisfy these conditions, the planner must seek out the enemy centers of gravity, because it is through the defeat of these centers of gravity that the end state is achieved.

CENTER OF GRAVITY

The concept of center of gravity (The German term is Schwerpunkt) was developed by Clausewitz as an analogy and heuristic device to provide a focus and framework for application of military force.[25] He defined center of gravity as "The hub of all power and movement on which everything depends."[26] At the operational level, center of gravity is defined as "That characteristic, capability, or locality from which the force derives its freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight...[It can be] the mass of the enemy force, a vital command and control center, or perhaps its logistical base...."[27] The center of gravity represents a concentration of enemy strength. The most concentrated aspect which is most vital to him in the accomplishment of his operational aims.[28] At the strategic level, the center of gravity may be an economic resource, allied cohesion,

the mental and psychological balance of a key commander, or something even more intangible, such as morale or national will.[29]

Clausewitz's definition of center of gravity is primarily oriented on defeat and destruction of the enemy's armed forces.[30] This concept does not fit well in a LIC environment where the primary focus of war is on the political-social system as the main battle arena.[31] Because of the reflection of Clausewitzian theory of war in modern US doctrine, LIC does not easily fit into the prevailing American notion of conflict and operational art. While all wars are political in nature, LICs are unique because they concentrate on control of the political-social system at a much lower degree of force and with relatively less military. Therefore the principles of war that undergird U.S. military professionalism are not generally applicable to unconventional conflicts.[32]   Consequently, centers of gravity in LIC are not necessarily found on the battlefield but in the political-social system of the country involved.[33]For this reason, the concept of center of gravity as it applies to conventional warfare and LIC may remain constant but with differing results.

The medium for translating strategic goals into operational objectives is the campaign plan. A critical element of a campaign plan is identification of and orientation on the enemy center of gravity. Campaign plans orient on the enemy's center of gravity in order to make his position in the theater of war disadvantageous,

rob him of initiative or his will to continue to fight, and to defeat him. At the strategic level of war, the theater commander may see the enemy center of gravity in abstract or complex focus, such as alliance solidarity or national will. At the operational level of war, the commander is likely to focus on a concrete center of gravity, the main enemy force. Consequently, since it focuses more on describing the enemy's main strength at the strategic and operational level of war and less on the method of enjoining battle, the notion of center of gravity becomes less important for simple, tactical level, maneuvering.[34]

In his treatise, <u>On War</u>, Clausewitz offers the following discourse on dominant enemy characteristics as possible centers of gravity. This discourse is primarily oriented at the strategic level but has applicability across the entire continuum of war from conventional war to LIC.

> " In countries subject to domestic strife, the center of
> gravity is generally the capital."
> " In small countries that rely on large ones, it is usually
> the army of the protector."
> " Among alliances, it lies in the community of interest."
> " In popular uprisings, it is the personalities of the leaders
> and public domain."[35]

To see their application to LIC, it is necessary to view them from the perspective of revolutionary war. Because an insurgency is normally characterized by a popular uprising caused by domestic

strife, the first and fourth centers of gravity described by Clausewitz have direct application to LIC. The second and third have an application on the organization itself as they relate to the relationship between the different components and their base of support. If the supporting populace, who rely on the insurgency for protection from the legal government, are viewed as a small country, then a strong argument can be made that the insurgency as their protector could be liken to the army of the protector. The psychological theme, that binds the pockets of resistance together, can be likened to the common theme that binds an alliance together. Defeat of the psychological theme will pull the insurgency apart much the same as defeat of the common theme will the alliance. The relationship between the psychological theme of the insurgency and alliances and community of interest then becomes apparent. Thus a strong link exists between strategic centers of gravity and operational characteristics of the enemy in LIC. This reinforces the need to identify strategic centers of gravity in LIC during the strategic planning process.

As previously stated, centers of gravity are not always readily apparent. The first task, according to Clausewitz, is to identify the enemy's centers of gravity, and if possible trace them back to a single one.[36] Care must be exercised when selecting centers of gravity because their characteristics often overlap. The fact that centers of gravity may not exist in isolation and can be created or changed as a conflict progresses tends to complicate

12

the identification and selection process. To be of utility, they must be appropriate to the nature of the conflict and the political objectives.[37] Three rules have been proposed to serve as a validity test for selecting a center of gravity with any confidence. Application of these rules requires asking the following questions:

1. If I desire to impose my will on the center of gravity, will that create a cascading, deteriorating effect in cohesion, will and morale of my foe.

2. Will defeating this center of gravity prevent my enemy from achieving his aims and allow the achievement of my own aims.

3. Do I have a feasible ability to impose my will over this center of gravity.[38]

These are only rules for determining the validity of a center of gravity and must not be used as a sole source criteria for identification of them. As discussed earlier, identification of enemy vulnerabilities is crucial in identifying the center of gravity. At this point it is important to differentiate between a vulnerability, a weakness, and a center of gravity. Neither a vulnerability nor a weakness is the center of gravity.[39] A weakness may be a vulnerability if it is susceptible to attack and leads to the destruction of the enemy center of gravity. An attack on a component of the center of gravity which weakens it makes the center of gravity itself more vulnerable. Through continued attacks on these weak components one can ultimately weave himself

13

through the maze of strengths surrounding the center of gravity bringing to climax its attack and destruction.[40]

Planning at the strategic level, therefore, focuses on these vulnerabilities to ultimately cause the defeat of the enemy center of gravity. Because of the ambiguity involved in LIC operations, it is often necessary to maneuver the enemy into revealing his weaknesses. In war, the combatant commander's focus is on objectives involving the destruction of the main enemy forces, command and control capabilities, logistic bases, and lines of communication. In the LIC environment, the objective often surrounds the issue of legitimacy or willingness to accept the right of a government as perceived by its population, to govern.[41] It involves perceptions of a diplomatic, psychological, and economic nature. The resultant relationship between the different elements often results in an unclear delineation among the various echelons and components. To be effective, operations must then be capable of influencing several levels simultaneously. Because LIC involves perceptions of diplomatic, psychological, and economic actions, the use of center of gravity in strategic planning must therefore go beyond movement and posturing of forces.[42] Orientation must be on the total environment and its significant components accordingly.

In studying centers of gravity and their relationship on LIC planning, I will not postulate a methodology for developing centers of gravity, but rather analyze each LIC operational category to identify potential centers of gravity and assess their linkage to defeat of enemy forces. These potential centers of gravity will then be compared to those postulated by Clausewitz, which were discussed earlier (Capital Cities, Political Elites and Public Morale, Industrial Centers, and Alliances),to show the link between the Clausewitzan centers of gravity and LIC planning. The reader must remain ever mindful that the objective of this study is not to produce a concrete listing of centers of gravity that is all inclusive. Nor should the results be accepted as an alternative for a through analysis of the situation and derivation of centers of gravity appropriate to the conflict.

OPERATIONAL CATEGORIES OF LIC

INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

An insurgency is nothing more than an armed revolution against the established order.[43] A pure insurgency is self sustaining and primarily an internal affair. Time is the ally of the insurgent. The longer the insurgency survives, the stronger it gets.[44] The center of the insurgents' strength and the key to survival is their covert military structure and reliance on the general population for logistical support. Unlike conventional forces, insurgents use

small unit tactics with protracted operations to avoid decisive defeat. Since they are supported by the countries infrastructure, their logistics follow revolutionary concepts and tend to flow in the opposite direction of their attack. Because they incorporate the concepts of revolutionary warfare in their overthrow of the established government, an insurgency therefore can be viewed as a form of revolution.[45]

Revolutions are conducted by organizations which operate within defined phases over time to achieve their aims. These organizations are interdependent and mature in both complexity and size as the revolution advances to each succeeding phase. A knowledge of these organizations and their relationship to each phase will help in the search for centers of gravity.

An insurgent's organization is usually composed of three major components: guerrilla units, auxiliary units, and the underground.[46] The guerrilla force comprises 10% of the overall force. He is most active in the initial phase of the insurgency depending on secrecy as he seeks the support of the populace in his covert recruitment effort.[47] Key to defeating the guerrilla is exposing his effort and destroying his ability to recruit personnel and sustain his activities.

The second component, the auxiliary, is the largest and perhaps most important element of the organization. It composes

80-85% of an insurgent movement and provides recruits, supplies, shelter, and intelligence to the guerrilla.[48] Because of its size and physical dispersion, it is often hard to defeat using a conventional combat force. Application of a psychological theme aimed at discrediting the insurgent and providing support to the legal government offer the best strategy for defeat.

The final component is the underground. This contains the brains of the insurgency and the military and political headquarters. It is usually located in an urban area and is responsible for developing campaign plans, orchestrating the efforts of the guerrilla and auxiliary units, and directing the propaganda program.[49] As the brain of the organization, defeat of the underground is essential in any offensive plan. Because of its importance, the underground has great potential as a center of gravity.

Time is the alley of the insurgent. As previously discussed, the organization grows in both size and complexity as the insurgency matures. Different strengths and weaknesses emerge in each phase which may cause changes in the center of gravity. The approach to identifying the center of gravity which will ultimately lead to defeat of the insurgency therefore depends not only on the target organizational component but also the phase of the insurgency.

An insurgency can be divided into three phases. Phase I is defined as "organization" or according to Vo Nguyen Giap the "State of Contention". During the initial passive portion of this phase, organization of the insurgency is conducted through the recruitment of people and development of bases. Conflict is avoided. As the organization develops and bases expand, the insurgency moves to a more active state marked by an increase in violence. Open battle is avoided, while continuous force buildup occurs and indoctrination is increased to unite and control the populace. According to Mao, this phase is indispensable.[50] Lenin reinforces the importance of this phase. He stated that no revolution is durable without a stable organization of leaders to preserve continuity. He felt this was the first and most essential task of any revolution.[51] To defeat a revolution in this phase requires the accurate identification of the leadership structure and the application of a plan which penetrates the insurgent's organization separating him from the populace, either physically or through a psychological program aimed at discrediting him in the eyes of the populace.

As the insurgency continues to pick up momentum, it enters the second phase, the "State of equilibrium".[52] Sabotage and terrorism increase. As strength increases, full scale guerrilla war is initiated. In this phase, the guerrilla is primarily concerned with surviving, securing active resistance from the population, and wearing down and demoralizing government forces. Mao warns of moving to the next stage of an insurgency until the

movement is sure of ultimate and total victory.[53] Defeat of the insurgency in this phase requires both engagement of the insurgent in open combat and a deception operation aimed at forcing the insurgency to go to phase III prematurely. Defeat of the guerrilla in open warfare is often a long drawn out affair. Nations often are not properly prepared physically or psychologically to undertake it. Therefore, a strategy relying on deception aimed at forcing the insurgent to advance into his next phase before his organization is fully developed may cause the cascading and deteriorating effect necessary to bring about a rapid termination to the conflict.

In phase III, the "Stage of counter-offensive", the insurgency is marked by open civil war fought by well organized and trained forces.[54] This stage requires a great deal of equipment and supplies. The source of this equipment and supplies can be either internal or external to the country. Because of the criticality of supplies, Vo Nguyen Giap stated that a strong rear is always the decisive factor in revolutionary war.[55] This was reinforced during the Vietnam conflict where the Vietnamese established a secure base of support ranging from Cambodia to China. Without this base of support, Giap's forces would not have been able to carry on their battle against the U.S. which eventually culminated in the fall of Saigon and victory in the peoples war.

Because an insurgency is a revolution against the legitimate government, the strategic focus is its legitimacy. At the operational level, this involves discrediting the insurgent's ideological goals in the eyes of the populace. A successful counterinsurgency operation therefore requires identification of the various organizations and their members, the stage of the insurgency, the psychological theme and base of support. Once these are known, the link can be established between the operational vulnerabilities and strategic support to the legitimate government. Planners can then begin to identify centers of gravity and develop plans to defeat them.

COMBATTING TERRORISM

Terrorism is defined as "the unlawful use of-or threatened use of-force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives."[56] The terrorist neither seeks nor requires popular support. His activities do not conform to the rules of law or warfare. Targets are frequently noncombatants or a symbolic person or place who usually have no role in either causing or correcting the terrorist's grievances. Terrorist methods are wide ranging and can include hostage taking, hijacking, sabotage, assassination, arson, hoaxes, bombings, and armed attacks or threats thereof.[57]

20

Although modern military thought reflects the writings of Clausewitz, the ancient military theorist Sun Tzu recognized and postulated on how to defeat terrorism. While Clausewitz concentrated on the defeat of the enemy forces, Sun Tzu saw this as a last resort. In defeating terrorism, he advocated the destruction of an enemy's alliances as the preferred strategy. If that failed, he then advocated defeating the enemy's strategy. His final recourse, only when all else failed, was the destruction of the enemy army.[58]

Since the terrorist seeks neither popular or social support, his alliance is not a tangible entity. Instead, it can be viewed as the psychological association between his act and the target audience. Therefore at the strategic level, the center of gravity for a terrorist is not a person or group of people, but rather the social-psychological results intended from his acts. At the operational level, it is the medium used to broadcast the results of his actions. Consequently, a strategy to defeat terrorism would focus on the legitimacy of his action at the strategic level and public acceptance of his actions at the operational level.

PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Peacekeeping operations support diplomatic efforts to achieve, restore, or maintain peace in areas of potential or actual conflict.[59] They generally have three levels of organization: the political council, the military peacekeeping command, and the

21

military area command.[60] Participation in peacekeeping operations may be individuals serving in any of these levels as observers or a military force involved in the actual peacekeeping operation. The major elements of power involved in peacekeeping operations are political and military.

The key in peacekeeping operations is to maintain the neutrality of the enforcement force. Loss of confidence by the belligerents can lead to deterioration of the peacekeeping effort which will adversely effect the desired peace and stability. Thus the center of gravity lies not so much with contending states as it does with the peacekeeping force in its ability to adjudicate conflicts without taking sides. Maintenance of this indirect center of gravity can be viewed as being as essential to victory in peace keeping operations as defeat of enemy forces is in conventional operations, because either one has the potential to lead to defeat of the enemy.

CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

Contingency operations are politically sensitive military activities normally characterized by short-term, rapid projection or employment of forces in conditions short of war.[61] Military efforts in peacetime contingency operations complement political and informational initiatives. This distinguishes peacetime contingency operations from contingency operations in war, which are often conducted for purely military objectives.[62] A major

element of our National Military Strategy is the concept of applying decisive force to overwhelm our adversaries and thereby terminate conflicts swiftly with a minimum loss of U.S. life.[63] The forces employed should therefore be specially designated contingency forces who are well trained for rapid deployment, violent and decisive employment, and if necessary immediate redeployment.

The characteristics of a contingency operation include:

. An emergency or crisis situation.

. NCA involvement with U.S. national interest at stake.

. Operations that require a rapid military response.

. A trigger event.[64]

Successful contingency operations, like all military operations, require detailed planning and aggressive execution. Some of the major characteristics which demand inclusion of the concepts of design of the operation are:

. Rapid projection of military force.

. Forcible entry capability.

. Quick resolution (win early).[65]

Contingency operations during LIC are undertaken in crisis avoidance or crisis management situations requiring the use of military forces to enforce or support diplomatic initiatives, respond to emergencies, or protect lives.[66]

US LIC military doctrine de-emphasizes traditional reliance on large forces heavily armed with high technology, high firepower

weapons intent on achieving total control through violent combat. Instead, LIC doctrine emphasizes decentralized, light forces prepared to apply a flexible variety of means that will influence the outcome of a given situation in coordination with other instruments of national power. The basic principles of LIC doctrine emphasizes indirect military assistance with direct involvement of combat troops only in exceptional circumstances.[67]

When conventional forces are used in contingency operations, they are likely to be one of three main types: static defense forces, quick reaction forces, and ground forces designed to conduct extended operations. Static defense forces provide protection of bases, institutions, and infra-structure. They are used to guard against terrorists or sudden guerrilla attacks. [68] Their employment is primarily in the latter stages of phase I or in phase II of an insurgency. As a defensive force, their focus is the facilities they are protecting. Before moving to the offense, they would have to redefine their center of gravity to orient their operation on the organizational structure of the insurgency they are going to attack.

Quick reaction forces are designed to respond to emergencies such as attacks in force against important facilities--bridges, power plants, etc.--or on secure government controlled towns, villages, and cities and to conduct raids on identified guerrilla forces or facilities.[69] Due to the openness of the guerrilla

attacks, these forces would normally be employed in phase II or III of an insurgency. In these phases of the conflict, the center of gravity is likely to be the underground structure responsible for planning and resupply.

Guard forces operate throughout the countryside, primarily by conducting foot patrols.[70] By their very nature, guard forces are often employed in any phase of an insurgency against all three organizational components. The center of gravity would therefore vary depending on the organization by phase. Because of the fluidity in contingency operations, identification of the center of gravity at the strategic level is crucial to operational success. Strategic Commanders must constantly review the enemy situation to ensure an unnoticed shift in the enemy center of gravity doesn't take place which could jeopardize the success of their mission.

PEACEMAKING

A fifth and somewhat new operational category is that of peacemaking. Peacemaking is related to peacekeeping in that they both are stability operations. Whereas peacekeeping is designed to maintain a state of peace and does not necessarily include the use of military forces, peacemaking assumes violence is in progress.[71] The typical peacemaking operation typically involves an externally imposed seizure of power and is almost always focused on a capital city suffering from a violent contest for control. The external force is usually from a developed nation and is transported to

battle via air or amphibious means. Its initial objectives normally include communications centers and the physical seat of political authority. Key to success is the sudden appearance of overwhelming force. A weak force may fan the flames of nationalism, contribute to escalating the resistance, and possibly lead to the formation of rural guerrilla movement opposing the forced intervention.[72] A recent example of a peacemaking operation is Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. There a UN mandated force was employed to end the conflict between warring Warlords in and around the capital city of Mogadishu in an effort to bring peace and stability to that war torn and starving nation. Although the peacemaking force controlled the capital city, the conflict continued.

This scenario offers four candidates as the critical center of gravity: the armies of the opposing forces, leadership of the opposing armies, the capital city, or the will of the populace. When the three rule validity test is applied to each of these, the capital city falls out because even when Mogadishu was under friendly control, the warring parties moved elsewhere and the conflict continued. No cascading or deteriorating effect was created. The distribution of food and providing of security won the populace over and turned them against the warring parties. However, once again no cascading or deteriorating effect was created. Therefore, the center of gravity lies either in the leadership or in the armies of the warring sides, either of which

satisfy the first two rules in the validity test. The deciding factor then is which of them will allow the peacemaking force, within its capability, to achieve its strategic goals. The armies are spread throughout the country with sanctuaries in neighboring countries. Without significant reinforcements, defeat of them is not readily feasible. In contrast, the leaders exert a great deal of influence and control over their respective armies. All show signs of willingness to negotiate a peace without the requirement of escalation. Thus the leaders of the warring armies satisfy all three rules and are therefore the best candidate as a center of gravity.

STRATEGIC CENTERS OF GRAVITY

Having just completed a discussion of the operational categories of LIC and an analysis of vulnerabilities linking strategic goals to operational centers of gravity, I will now apply the results to the doctrinal strategic centers of gravity. The following analysis will reveal the strategic link we are searching for by showing how the theoretical strategic centers of gravity, which Clausewitz espoused, relate to LIC planning.

Capital City as a Center of Gravity.

Historically after armed forces, capital cities have probably been the most often selected center of gravity.[73] In early times, a country's power rested with kings who concentrated their forces in their capitals, often their castles, guarding royal treasures.

27

Wars and conflicts were fought much like a chess game by laying siege to the castle and capturing or killing the king himself. Because a king seldom had the capability to physically move his royal treasure, his center of gravity seldom changed. If he could move, even though his castle fell, he still had the capability to raise a new army and continue the conflict. Therefore, a capital city only serves as a center of gravity as long as the ruling body, the government, can not physically move and reestablish itself at a new location. If a capital city is selected as the center of gravity, and the attack on it is delayed long enough to allow a physical and psychological transfer of power, the value of the capital city declines.[74] Therefore, when selecting a capital city as a center of gravity all possible measures must be taken to ensure;

1. The physical and psychological power is not transferrable.

2. A rapid application of force is achieved to capture the city prior the transfer of power.

Because of the rapid entry capability of forced entry operations, they are ideally suited to isolating a city with the intent of quickly attacking to defeat it or preventing the escape of the government's controlling body until sufficient combat power can build up to defeat it. This rapid application of combat power not only prevents the physical transfer of power but also serves as a means to defeat the psychological will to resist.

The concept of a capital city as a center of gravity can be expanded to any city in a LIC environment where they are inherently important as a base of support for an insurgency. All three components of an insurgency: guerrilla, auxiliary, and underground rely on a base of support for existence. With the rapid urbanization of the 20th century, cities will provide more fertile ground for insurgencies because of their ability to serve as this base for support, particularly for the underground which serves as the brain developing plans and directing the activities of the guerrilla and auxiliary.[75] Thus one can see the importance of a city to an insurgency and the need to develop operational plans to defeat the underground organization. Often this phase is conducted by special forces who are trained in such operations. If the counter-insurgency operations transitions into peacemaking operations, then one would have a situation where conventional forces could be employed and operational planning would focus on the city as its operational center of gravity. Therefore the concept of a capital city as a center of gravity has application in both counter-insurgency and peacemaking operations.

Political Elites as the Center of Gravity

Cases are rare where an individual or a small number of individuals are so vital to a nation's effort that their death would cause defeat. Hitler, Churchill, Stalin, Lee, Napoleon, and Alexander the Great might represent a few such individuals.[76] Consequently, before considering an individual as a center of

gravity, his influence must be as great as those just mentioned. Because of the uncertainty involved, and the countries ability to rapidly replace these leaders, such objectives would only play a minor role at the strategic level. Prior to selecting an individual or groups of individuals as the center of gravity, one therefore must ensure they can not be rapidly replaced by another such leader. Otherwise their loss would not create a cascading, deteriorating effect in cohesion, will and morale of the foe. The possibility of replacing a leader in LIC is high, particularly in the later phases of an insurgency. However, in phase I when the insurgency is still forming and leadership is centralized, often centering on the ideals of one person, a dominant figure can emerge on whose shoulders success rests. As the insurgency matures the leadership and control expand both in size and competency. Consequently, the probability of a single leader as a center of gravity diminishes as the insurgencies gains momentum. Thus political elites have applicability as a center of gravity in the early phases of insurgency and counter-insurgency operations.

Industrial Areas as a Center of Gravity

For an industrial area to be a center of gravity, two conditions must exist:

1. Enemy forces must be heavily dependent on the products of that area.

2. It must be impossible to disperse the industrial capacity.[77]

Prior to accepting an industrial area as a center of gravity, it must be analyzed at the economical level to determine the overall impact on the war making capability. If it leads to a rapid defeat or a de-escalation in the enemy's war fighting capability then it may qualify as a center of gravity. As discussed earlier, urban areas, especially industrial centers, provide an excellent base of support from which the insurgent's auxiliary can operate. Military writers differ in opinions as to the capabilities of urban insurgency. Carlos Marighella, identified urban areas as critical in phase I and II of an insurgency.[78] Ko Wang Mei once wrote, "No city has ever been able to be used as a base for any length of time."[79] B.H. Liddell Hart's ideas on the subject are: "Urban areas have mixed advantages and handicaps, but tend on balance to be unfavorable to guerrilla operations, although good ground for a subversive campaign."[80] Whether or not they serve as the center of gravity, industrial areas are vulnerabilities that can serve as the catalyst for bringing about social, political, and economic disruption which can shake a government at its foundation. Therefore, industrial area as center of gravity has application in LIC, particularly in defeat of the base of support of an insurgency.

Public Morale as a Center of Gravity

For public morale to qualify as a center of gravity, the government waging the war must be either sensitive or susceptible to public opinion and a deep sense of public discontent with the government must have existed prior to the war.[81] Democracies are the most invulnerable to this because of their tolerance for public display of discontentment. In an authoritarian or totalitarian nation, public morale can form more of a vulnerability than a center of gravity.[82] However, for this to occur, it must fester for a long time before it can be exploited. Because U.S. policy does not afford the luxury of slowly developing centers of gravity, public morale would not make a good center of gravity for contingency operations in a quick in, overwhelming force, and quick out operation.[83] In the early phase of an insurgency where the insurgent is reliant on the support of the populace, public morale satisfies the validity test for a center of gravity. If the populace can be convinced of the sufficiency of the legitimate government and refuse support to the insurgent, the insurgency can succumb to a quick death. For this reason, public morale as a center of gravity has significant applicability in LIC planning.

Alliance Cohesion as a Center of Gravity

Determination of an alliance as a center of gravity is a very difficult situation to assess. If the alliance is seen as

32

relatively trivial to the main power, then it is not a center of gravity. If it is critical to the conduct of the conflict, then it may qualify as a center of gravity. One must be careful when considering an alliance as a center of gravity. If the vulnerabilities are miscalculated, the strategic and operational objectives may cause the alliance to pull more closely together rather than disintegrate.[34] A recent example is Saddam Hussein's scud attack on Israel during Desert Storm. His identification of the U.S. lead coalition as the center of gravity was correct. However, he failed to properly identify the vulnerabilities that would lead to its defeat. Rather than gain the support of the Arab World and pull the U.S. lead alliance apart, the scud attack served as a catalyst for continued support to the alliance and also strengthened the members view on Israel's right to self defense.

If one looks at an alliance as a potential center of gravity from an insurgent's perspective, he can see that insurgent alliances are normally with like organizations. Owing to the ideological nature of an insurgency, these alliances are normally very obscure and do not make good targets. Hence, although alliances may pass the first two tests as a center of gravity for combatting insurgency, the inability to attack and rapidly defeat them without committing enormous resources decreases their probability for selection.[35] Unless one can defeat the ideological theme holding the insurgent's alliance together, the alliance itself does not make a good LIC center of gravity.

33

CONCLUSION

Because of the complexity of LIC, the enemy will usually have multiple centers of gravity. These may include such things as: third country support, the integrity of the insurgent, the political infrastructure, sanctuaries or secure base areas, relations with the populace, and key military leadership. Identification of the most critical center of gravity will be a complex task. It will be subject to frequent change as the environment comprising the enemy theme, the players, and the conflict maturity continually changes. Consequently, once the center of gravity is identified, timely action is critical.[86] Also critical is the need in strategic level planning for continual midcampaign re-evaluation of the center of gravity to ensure it remains relevant. Otherwise its importance may disappear rendering it useless to the campaign.[87]

Attack of a center of gravity is intended to lead to quick defeat of ones foe. This can be difficult in a LIC scenario where the centers of gravity often are intangible and tied to the political-social arena. If an identified center of gravity, critical to the strategic goals, can't be attacked, then ones opponent must be encouraged to respond in a way that will expose vulnerabilities or create a different center of gravity which is subject to defeat. When the center of gravity essential to success can't be made vulnerable, then the decision to go to war should be re-evaluated, or the objectives of war may need to change.[88] This

34

has significant implications in LIC where time is of the essence and the decisions to use force are rapidly made at the highest levels. The link between these decisions and operational objectives is therefore essential if one seeks quick and decisive victories. Caution must be exercised and care taken to ensure the center of all power is defeated, otherwise an enemy who is only partially defeated may rise to fight again.[89] Does one then seek the cheapest, quickest resolution to a conflict or seek a war of conflict termination.[90] This decision rests with the nation's leaders in the prosecution of national interests and the public's commitment to them. When and if a national interest is threatened requiring the application of military power in a LIC scenario, the link between strategic goals and operational maneuver will be essential. The implications for identification of a center of gravity in strategic planning are therefore critical in the proper allocation of limited military resources, particularly in the new world order where multiple, unexpected low intensity conflicts can arise at anytime.

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